

# **Introducing the Virtual Land Law Field Trip Project**

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*This blog post provides a brief introduction to the concept, development and implementation of the Virtual Land Law Field Trip Project @Sussex. It also revisits some of the key arguments in favour of the incorporation of the 'visual' in our teaching.*

## **The concept**

The Virtual Land Law Field Trip Project @ Sussex grew out of a simple desire to take students out of the lecture theatre and on a 'field trip' through the use of bespoke videos. In terms of early conceptualisation, the project sought to offer a counter to traditional lecture and seminar modes of instruction and to provide a means – through video – to move further into reality and help our students in their spatial understanding of the subject matter and to see, and feel, the operation of land law in practice.

Once filming began however the primary objective of the project shifted somewhat. The project, and ultimately I, became driven by a desire to provide a space within which to challenge the narratives of, and in, the land law curriculum. The primary objective was no longer therefore merely about using the visual to enhance “response strengthening and information acquisition” (Mayer, 2009) but it was also about building another platform for constructive and deep learning and to tap into our students “zone of proximal development”. ([See previous blog by Graham Ferris](#))

The videos – 10 as it currently stands – are intended therefore to provide a platform, within the land law module, to ask questions of the curriculum itself. Who is land law for? Who does it alienate and exclude? In this respect, the project is inspired by the work of Cowan, Layard and Finchett-Maddock (to name but a few) in challenging themes of “alienation, exclusion, responsibility and power” within the subject of land law (Cowan, Fox O’ Mahony and Cobb, 2016).

The videos are short in length and include topics on homelessness, the housing crisis and the Grenfell Disaster.

### **Development and implementation**

Filming for the video project began in January 2017 and ended in July 2017. To produce the videos, I worked with two students from the School of Music, Media and Film. Though time consuming, this was a most rewarding process and experience and certainly endorsed Eilam’s theory on the “dual function of visual literacy” (2012). According to [Eilam](#), when teachers increase their visual literacy they improve as teachers because they are better able to select, construct and use appropriate instructional communications. Teachers improve as teachers (and learners) when they improve their knowledge of how to use and interpret visual representations.

Following the process of video revisions and editing (July/August 2017), the videos were then uploaded to YouTube (private setting selected) which in turn allowed me to upload and add to our VLE before the start of the 2017/18 academic term.

### **Next Steps**

Whilst I am happy with the videos produced for this project – and the objective of providing a platform to engage, critique and question – on reflection, I am not happy with the way in which the videos have been utilised and embedded into the module. Further work is needed before the next academic year to ensure more effective engagement and use of the videos and to ensure more tangible links with learning outcomes and assessment. Over the summer period therefore, it is my intention to further develop the videos by using technologies such as [H5P](#), [Vizia](#) or [EdPuzzle](#) to make the videos more interactive by asking questions at different points *during* the videos, for example. It is also hoped that we will be able to allow space this year for students to develop their own land law videos in groups.

### **Does it matter? Is there any benefit to utilising a more visual approach in the teaching of land law?**

I absolutely agree that there is no point in innovation for the sake of ‘innovation’ or the use of technology for the sake of it, but the research clearly tells us – particularly that of Richard Mayer – that multimedia instruction does work. It works because of how the human mind works. The rationale for presenting material in both “words and pictures” or “as dynamic visual representations” is that it takes advantage of the full capacity of humans for processing information. Learners have different sensory paths. There is more than one channel for learning, observing and sensing. Multimedia instruction therefore taps into different sensory modalities for learning.

Whilst there is no denying that verbal and written representations hold, and should hold, a most privileged place in the discipline of law and by correlation in legal education, the concept of literacy in legal education could “be broadened to include more visual representations so as to foster more meaningful learning” (Eilam, 2012: xiii). More visual representations need not replace the text and the verbal but rather these forms of instruction can be used to enhance and support and to allow situations ‘speak’ for themselves and to allow for a more “multisensory approach” ([Brunschwig](#), 2012, 2014) in the lecture theatre and the seminar room.